

Danesfort Dispatches

A Quarterly Newsletter from the U.S. Consulate General Belfast

January 2012



Vol. 7, Issue 1

Dear American Community,

Warm greetings from the U.S. Consulate General in Belfast. Please accept my best wishes for a very Happy New Year, and I hope you and your families and friends enjoyed a restful holiday season. As I write this I'm hearing reports of snow blanketing the east coast of the U.S., and I am therefore even more thankful for the rather mild winter we have enjoyed here thus far.

During January we remember the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, which allows us to reflect upon how far we have come as a nation, but also challenges each one of us to help create, as Secretary Clinton recently remarked, a "world that is really worthy of our children." During his speech this past autumn at the dedication of the memorial to Dr. King in Washington, D.C., President Obama noted how Dr. King's legacy proves "change can come if you do not give up" -- words that I believe have resonance here in Northern Ireland.

An important part of creating that world which we want our children to inherit is participation in our democracy. As the primary election heats up across the water, this edition of the newsletter provides important information on how you can register and vote in this year's elections. We also detail some important ways that you and your families can protect yourselves while traveling and how to avoid some of the many scams which seek to exploit the internet. As you fill out your social calendars for the coming months, I would highly recommend having a look at the many wonderful cultural experiences on tap, to include the Belfast-Nashville Songwriters Festival -- a world-class gathering of musicians and those who love the artistry of songwriting which celebrates our shared culture.

Once again, please accept our best wishes for a happy, safe, healthy, and prosperous 2012, and be sure to keep in touch.

Kevin Roland,
Acting Consul General
U.S. Consulate General Belfast

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)



Millions of Americans travel abroad every year and encounter no difficulties. However, U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency.

When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your foreign travel, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By informing us about your trip or residence abroad, you help the embassy or consulate locate you when you might need them the most.

Signing up is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security. For more information visit the Department of State website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Passports - Issued Outside the US	2
Spotlight: Internet Romance Scams	3
Scams (con'td)	4
Titanic Events for 2012	4
Voting: Frequently Asked Questions	5
Visas & ESTA	5
Culture Corner	6

Passport Issuance - Overseas vs. Domestic Passport Offices



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE:
028 9038 6100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 028 9068 1301

Email:

ConsularBelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



Applying for a U.S. passport while *outside* the United States is a different process from applying for a U.S. passport while *inside* the United States. Although the application forms, supporting documentation, fees and finished products are the same everywhere, each **U.S. embassy and consulate has different procedures for submitting and processing your final documents**. Listed below is information you should know when applying for a U.S. passport while outside the United States.

Application Forms - If you are applying from outside of the United States, DO NOT follow the submission instructions included within the application form, as they are intended for people applying from within the United States. The same application forms are used whether you are inside or outside the U.S., but the process for submitting the forms will be different. Check with the U.S. Consulate General Belfast, Northern Ireland website, <http://belfast.usconsulate.gov> for submitting your application.

Supporting Documents - Present supporting documents--verifying your citizenship and identity--to the Consular Section along with your application form. The required supporting documentation varies based on the application form used, so consult the website for more details.

Photos - The photo you submit for your application must meet all U.S. passport photo specifications. Be aware that photo requirements for a U.S. passport vary from passport photo requirements of the United Kingdom and Ireland. [Click here for passport photo specifications and chemists in Northern Ireland](#).

London 2012 Olympics: U.S. Embassy London Gets Ready

With the London 2012 Olympics just around the corner, do you have U.S. citizen family or friends who are heading over to the UK for a short stay or extended visit?

The U.S. Embassy London intends to build on its use of social media to reach the thousands of American citizens who will travel to the United Kingdom. In addition to providing up-to-the-minute information via Twitter and responding to email inquiries, the Embassy is working on YouTube videos aimed to help prepare U.S. citizens coming to the Olympics before they depart the United States. The Embassy will also launch an Olympics blog in early 2012. The blog will provide information on the Olympics geared towards U.S. citizens, including steps that should be taken before traveling and services that the Embassy will provide during the games.

Here is their dedicated London 2012 Games page: <http://london.usembassy.gov/>.

Foreign Service Exam for February 2012

Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) advocate American foreign policy, protect American citizens, and promote American business interests throughout the world. FSOs staff our Embassies, Consulates and other diplomatic missions devoted to strengthening peace, stability, and prosperity. Their perceptiveness, dedication, and creativity drive the formulation and achievement of American foreign policy objectives. Increasingly, transnational issues such as the environment, science and technology; the global struggle against diseases such as AIDS; international law enforcement cooperation and counter narcotics trafficking; counter proliferation and international action against trafficking in persons have gained stature among American foreign policy objectives. What awaits you in the Foreign Service is the opportunity of a lifetime. You'll get to know foreign languages and cultures while making a difference in the lives of both U.S. and foreign citizens.

The Foreign Service Officer selection process begins with online registration, followed by a written and oral exam. The upcoming FSO Exam takes place February 4-11, 2012. For more information on test registration and a list of available locations overseas to take the test, go to <http://careers.state.gov>. Register soon... For the job of a lifetime!!



Spotlight: Internet Romance Scams and Diversity Visa Scams

The Defense Attaché Office (DAO) regularly receives inquiries from people who have established an online relationship with someone who is purportedly a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and they have been asked to send this service member money. In many cases, the money has already been sent and the inquirer is seeking to verify if this is standard practice in the U.S. Armed Forces. Unfortunately, in every situation presented to the DAO thus far, it has turned out to be an internet fraud.

Warnings from the U.S. Army CID



The [U.S. Army's Criminal Investigation Command](#) (CID) has made two press releases regarding this type of internet fraud, attached below. It is recommended that you read both of these documents:

17 Oct 2010 : [U.S. Army CID Pleads with Public, Warns Against Romance Scams](#) (PDF - 160Kb)

12 Oct 2010 : [U.S. Army CID Warns Unsuspecting Victims of Internet Romance Scams](#) (PDF - 46Kb)

If you believe that you have been the victim of Internet fraud, please follow the advice presented in the above links.

If you have specific questions that have not been addressed above, please submit your inquiry to DAOLondon@state.gov

Spotting Scams

Here are some common questions we get from victims of fraud.

How can fraudsters create fake IDs? There is a vast amount of information that is within the public domain on the Internet. This includes photographs of U.S. service personnel that have been published by both official sources, such as the Department of Defense, and by the individual service members themselves.

Therefore, it is very easy for anyone to download images of U.S. personnel and then use them to create a profile on an internet dating/social networking website without the service member knowing. All the photographs that have been received by the DAO appear to be genuine; however, the perpetrators normally alter the name making positive identification near impossible.

How does a member of the U.S. Armed Forces request leave? While specific procedures for requesting and granting leave differ among the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, they do have one item in common.

The request and authorization to take leave is between the individual service member and his immediate command – family, friends, third parties are **not** involved.

I have been asked to help pay for leave. Is that normal? The military normally only requires contact information for the service member at their leave destination. There is no requirement for family or friends to request leave on behalf of the service member or provide extensive personal information. There is no requirement for family or friends to pay for the service member's leave and there are no processing/administrative fees involved with requesting leave.

But I've seen official documents! "Official" documents are often sent with the above mentioned leave requests. While there is a paperwork requirement for the service member to complete, family members and/or friends are **not** asked to complete paperwork in order for the service member to take leave.

The following attached documents are examples of forgeries that have been submitted to DAO London. Again, **these are forgeries** and are **not** used by any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

[Fraudulent example of a Leave Request \(PDF - 244kb\)](#)

[Fraudulent example of "leave charges" \(PDF - 279kb\)](#)

(Continued on page 4)

Internet Romance Scams (cont'd)

(Continued from page 3)

Fraudulent example of a leave approval form (PDF - 382kb)

Diversity Visa Scams

I received an email telling me I'm the winner in the U.S. Diversity Lottery? What should I do? The U.S. government **never** contacts visa lottery winners via the Internet. Scammers are using increasingly sophisticated techniques that often use the Embassy's address or name an actual person at the U.S. Embassy in London as the point of contact. This would never happen if you really had won the visa lottery. The U.S. Government will **NOT** ask you to send money to them or to the Embassy in London or any other U.S. Embassy. Any message that asks you to send money, by mail or by services such as Western Union, **is a scam** even if a legitimate Embassy address is provided.

I think I am a victim of a scam. Can you help? You should read the following general information about internet fraud which has been prepared by the Consular Section, U.S. Embassy London and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, Department of State.

Department of State – [International Financial Scams](#)

Department of State – [Internet Dating and Romance Scams](#)

Department of State – [Resources for Victims of International Financial Scams](#)

Also, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service has set up a blog, The Beacon. Their blog, <http://blog.uscis.gov>, offers an entry on how to detect a fraudulent email about U.S. green cards, <http://blog.uscis.gov/search/label/Green%20Card>.

Titanic Events Planned for Belfast in 2012

This year, April 2012, will mark the centenary of Titanic's fateful maiden voyage. The Belfast City Council, along with partners Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Titanic Belfast, are hosting a fusion of international-scale events to mark the centenary.

The various programs will take place from February to May, 2012.

The following websites can provide more information:

Belfast City Council, Events - <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/titanicquarter/titanicevents.asp>

Titanic Stories - www.the-titanic.com

Titanic Belfast - <http://www.titanicbelfast.com>

Northern Ireland Tourist Board - http://www.nitb.com/ni2012/event_Titanic.aspx

Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, TITANICa - <http://www.nmni.com>



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE:
028 9038 6100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 028 9068 1301

Email:

Consularbelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



Overseas Voting: Frequently Asked Questions



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE:
028 9038 6100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 028 9068 1301

Email:

Consularbelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



Q: How soon can I send in my Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)? Now?

A: We recommend sending in your FPCA on or after January 1st of each year and every time you change your name, mailing address, or email address.

Q: I plan to vote absentee from abroad in the primary elections, but will be back in the United States for the November general elections? Do I have to do anything special?

A: When you fill out your FPCA, include a note to your local election officials that you'll be returning to the United States on xxx date. Once you are back home, contact your local election officials to confirm your new U.S. address and your intention to vote in the United States.

Q: I'm a U.S. citizen but I've never lived in the United States. Can I vote?

A: Each state has its own residency requirements relating to voter eligibility. Some states allow voters who have never lived in the United States to use their parents' state of voting residence. It's best to get in touch with local election officials in the place where your parents last lived, or the place where you have visited frequently, to find out if you are eligible to register to vote. FVAP's Voting Assistance Guide will have a section titled **Voting by Citizens Who Have Never Lived in the U.S.** if the state has passed laws allowing these citizens to vote. See the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov.



Q: I haven't lived in the United States for a long time, and don't know what our address was? Can I vote in any state? What do I do?

A: All voting in the United States is based on your residency. Normally, you'd use the address where you last lived before leaving the United States, even if it was a very long time ago. Someone in your family may have old letters which contain an address. You can also check medical, church, school, or property records, or write to the Social Security Administration. For more details, visit www.fvap.gov.

For information about the U.S. Election process and all thing related, visit the U.S. Embassy London site at <http://london.usembassy.gov>.

Tourist/Business Travel Information for Non-U.S. Citizens

Are any of your non-American friends or family traveling to the U.S. for tourism or business? If so, they can follow the easy steps below to determine if visa-free travel is an option and if not, to apply for the appropriate visa.

1. Check that you and your passport meet the criteria for visa-free travel under the Visa Waiver Program using the Visa Waiver Wizard at <http://london.usembassy.gov/root/visa-wizard/pages/index.html>.
2. If you and your passport meet the criteria for visa-free travel, apply for travel clearance at least 72 hours in advance of travel BUT PREFERABLY BEFORE YOU MAKE ANY NON-REFUNDABLE TRAVEL ARRANGMENTS on the only official ESTA website <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>. The fee for ESTA travel clearance is \$14.
3. If you do not meet the criteria for visa-free travel and/or your ESTA application is denied, apply for a tourist B2 and/or business B1 visa by following the instructions at <http://belfast.usconsulate.gov/apply.html>.

For Visa FAQs, refer to <http://belfast.usconsulate.gov/visa-faq.html>. For information about other categories of non-immigrant visa (e.g. for work or study in the U.S.), refer to <http://london.usembassy.gov/nonimmigrant-visas.html>. Any questions that are not addressed on the website can be submitted by email to the Visa Section at consularbelfast@state.gov.

Culture Corner

The U.S. Consulate General occasionally provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Out to Lunch Arts Festival 2012 - January 4-29, 2012 - The annual Belfast festival which offers a warming menu of comedy, theatre, art and literature throughout the lunchtimes and evenings of January. The sibling festival of the internationally-acclaimed Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, Out to Lunch is a blend of "big names", emerging acts and fringe performances. Visit www.cqaf.com or telephone 02890 246609 for details.

Chinese New Year Celebrations - February 4, 2012—Ulster Hall hosts the New Year celebrations. 2012 marks the year of the dragon and the entertainment includes traditional Chinese performances as well as art and craft workshops and specialist food stalls. Visit the Belfast City Council website <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/>.

International Festival of County Music - February 29, 2012 - A stellar line up of country music stars will convene in Belfast in February for the International Festival of Country Music at the Odyssey Arena. Headlined by global country superstar *Reba McEntire*, the festival promises to bring the very best in country, roots and bluegrass music at the family friendly all-day event. Visit their website at <http://festivalofcountrymusic.com/>

8th Panarts Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival - February 22-26, 2012. One of the best events on the music calendar, this festival is supported by the U.S. Consulate. It provides a scintillating jam - packed five days featuring the very best in song writing & performing. The line-up includes Nanci Griffith, Bap Kennedy & Band, John Oates, Todd Snider, Nick Lowe & Band, and many, many more! Details at www.belfastnashville.com.

Disclaimer: Listing of events and performances is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. Government or its designated representatives. Information is believed to be correct at the time it is listed.

American Citizen Services: In the event of a genuine emergency involving a U.S. Citizen in Northern Ireland, our after-hours phone number is 07545 507738.

Consular Closure Dates

The U.S. Consulate General Belfast will be closed on the following dates:

Monday, January 16, 2012 - Martin Luther King's Birthday

Monday, February 20, 2012 - President's Day

Monday, March 19, 2012 - St. Patrick's Day

Friday, April 6, 2012 - Good Friday

Monday, April 9, 2012 - Easter Monday

Tuesday, April 10, 2012 - Easter Tuesday

Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE:
028 9038 6100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 028 9068 1301

Email:
Consularbelfast@state.gov

Website:
<http://london.usembassy.gov>



KID'S CORNER

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WORD SEARCH

D	A	S	P	I	R	R	U	I	Y
L	M	C	R	E	A	T	B	E	E
H	E	O	E	E	C	F	C	Q	L
C	N	H	A	E	E	R	I	U	E
M	A	R	C	H	A	E	V	A	A
R	I	G	H	T	S	E	I	L	E
A	N	O	E	Z	L	T	L	I	V
V	E	H	R	E	E	K	I	N	G
L	A	W	D	D	O	C	T	O	R
J	U	S	T	I	C	E	G	A	G

EQUAL

RACE

MARCH

JUSTICE

LAW

FREE

MEN

KING

PREACHER

DOCTOR

RIGHTS

CIVIL